

Romeronews

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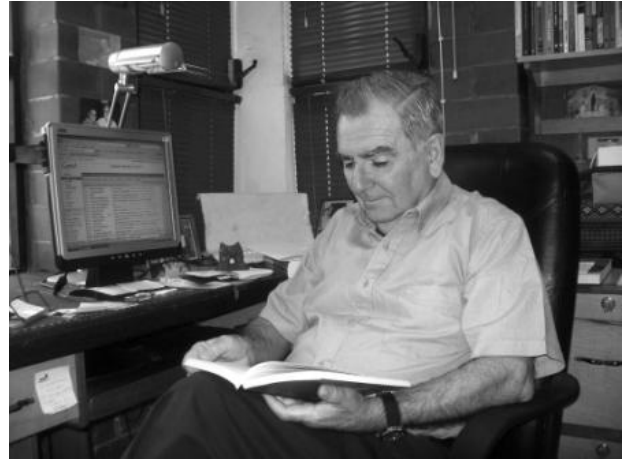
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Fr Juan Hernández Pico SJ will visit Britain from El Salvador to give the Archbishop Romero 2011 Lecture

Archbishop Romero 2011 Lecture

**“Romero and the Social Gospel -
The Challenge for Us Today”**

Fr Juan Hernández Pico will travel to Britain from El Salvador in March to give this year’s Archbishop Romero Lecture. Fr Juan is a Jesuit theologian based at the Romero Pastoral Centre, part of the Central American University (UCA).

Drawing on his personal memories of Romero, Fr Juan will share his reflections about Monseñor’s social gospel and the challenges it poses for us in today’s world.

Salford, Edinburgh, Newcastle and London

Tuesday 22 – Saturday 26 March



Archbishop Romero at the time of his consecration as bishop in 1970

Fr Juan Hernández Pico was born in the Basque country, and has joint Spanish/Guatemalan nationality. He has dedicated his life to pastoral work amongst poor communities in Guatemala, Nicaragua and El Salvador, many of which have suffered the violence of civil war. Before coming to the UCA, Fr Juan lived in the parish of La Natividad in the western highlands of Guatemala, working pastorally with Mayan indigenous communities.

He is the author and co-author of many publications, including “Living Christianity: Theological Reflections from Central America” and “Theology of Christian Solidarity”, co-written with Fr Jon Sobrino.

Dates of the Archbishop Romero Lecture 2011:

SALFORD: Tuesday 22 March at 7.00pm at St Peter & Paul Church, Pendleton, Salford.

EDINBURGH: Wednesday 23 March at 7.30pm in the Lauriston Jesuit Centre, next to Sacred Heart Church, Edinburgh.

NEWCASTLE: Thursday 24 March at 7.00pm at St Mary’s Cathedral, Newcastle.

LONDON: Saturday 26 March at 11.00am at St Martin-in-the-Fields, Trafalgar Square, London, as part of an ecumenical service to mark the thirty first anniversary of Archbishop Romero’s martyrdom.

The 2011 lectures are organised by the Archbishop Romero Trust in association with CAFOD, Pax Christi, Christian Aid, SCIAF, Progressio, Lauriston Centre, and diocesan members of NJPN..

Entry is free & all are welcome.

Four Reflections from the Romero Pilgrimage

Last November, 30 people travelled to El Salvador for the first-ever Romero Trust Pilgrimage. The group visited holy and historic sites across the country, retracing the life and death of Archbishop Romero and other religious martyrs. Four pilgrims write of their experience.

Katherine: In the Footsteps of Oscar Romero

Katherine Bryant is a student and member of the St Margaret of Scotland parish in London.

Before my visit to El Salvador, I knew very little about the country and its history. I travelled with my Mum and for both of us it was our first visit to Central America, so we arrived full of excitement although admittedly with a sense of apprehension! I truly believe that I have been changed by this experience and I feel tremendously fortunate to have met all the people along the journey, to listen to their stories of pain yet also of incredible hope and determination.



Katherine (left) with her mother Siobhan (right) visiting the home of Rosa Idalia, a woman farmer and community leader

I don't think that I will ever forget our visit to El Mozote, which was the site of the massacre of almost 1000 men, women and children in 1981 by the army. It was absolutely devastating to stand in a place of such waste and destruction. Sadly in El Salvador this case is not isolated. Amazingly, however I have left inspired by the love and utter humility of individuals working for change in El Salvador.

**Margaret: Re – Membering
Truth, Hope and Life in El Salvador**

*Margaret Siberry is the diocesan manager
for CAFOD in Leeds*

Rosa, standing tall, reached only to my shoulder. Aged 80, she had travelled alone the long journey by bus from Jayaque to San Salvador. She makes the same journey every year to take part in the annual vigil, marking the martyrdom on 16 November 1989 of the six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter.

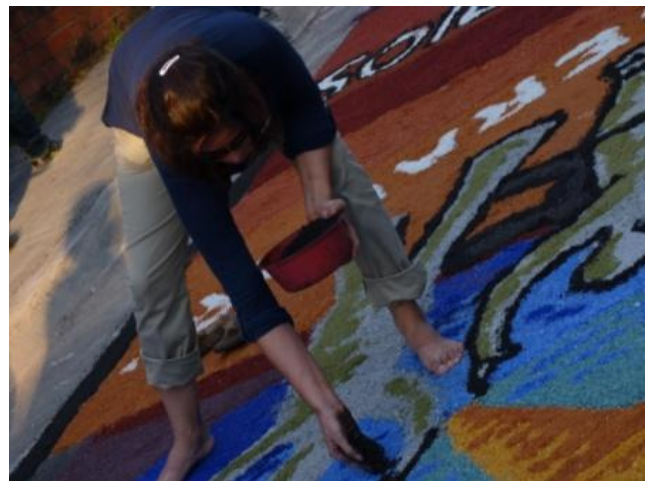
She comes to stand in solidarity and to give thanks for the support offered by the Jesuits to her community during the civil war and with resettlement afterwards.



Margaret (right) with fellow pilgrims Chris and Anne-Marie at the Monument to Historic Memory in San Salvador

This was her twenty-first year of witnessing to truth, peace and justice for the poor of El Salvador – our first - as we walked and prayed with the pilgrims, listening to their stories and marvelling at the number of young people whose commitment seemed just as strong as Rosa's.

The vigil was not nostalgia about the past but a remembering in its deepest sense, 'putting back together the body' – naming the truth that heals, as well as proclaiming today's reality - in order that all 'may have life, life in all its fullness.' (Jn10:10)



One of the UCA students, creating a sawdust carpet in memory of the martyrs killed at the University on 16 November 1989

We had come as pilgrims, not tourists, to this Land of Martyrs. We were there, each of us called in a unique way by the witness of Archbishop Romero, to listen, to learn, to share our stories and to walk for a while with the people of El Salvador.

We came to a country still polarised economically between powerful and powerless and where almost a third of the country's revenue comes from remittances sent by emigrants to the States. We learned of the violence and the need for the truth of the civil war atrocities to be told, so that the healing of individuals and the nation can happen.

**Stephen: No Christian love
Without the struggle for justice**

*Stephen Davies works for CAFOD
as a youth training coordinator*

Four days ago as Orlando was digging the foundations for his family's more permanent house, his axe struck a large bone. Getting a spoon to more delicately dig the earth, he uncovered more and more human bones. When he unearthed a set of dentures, his family recognised the remains as his grandmother, grandfather, aunts and an uncle.



Stephen Davies

In 1981, El Mozote, the town where Orlando and his family live, suffered one of the most atrocious massacres of the civil war. The army told the community leader to gather all the inhabitants of the area in the central square. Then they were split into four groups: children below age 9, older children, adolescent girls and older women and men. All were executed. The youngest to be murdered was one day old.

As I stood today amidst the ruins of the convent where hundreds of children were killed en masse, I realised that, when the massacre happened, I had just turned one – the same age as many of those killed.

Some people feel that what happened in El Salvador is just nostalgia and that the country

needs to get on with living in the present. The humbling experience I had today, being taken to see the bones of Orlando's family, found just days ago, a matter of feet from where they had been living, showed how important it still is to be aware of El Salvador, its history AND present.



Site of the convent where the children were killed
- with a memorial on the church wall behind

In the words of Ignacio Ellacuría, a Jesuit assassinated 21 years ago, just metres from where I type, "there is no Christian love without the struggle for justice".

From today, I need to reflect on what 'justice' means. I'll continue to keep the people of El Salvador in my prayers.

**Sylvia: A Visit to the Little Hospital
where Romero lived and died**

*Sylvia Lucas is a lay Carmelite. Here she writes
of her visit to the Divine Providence cancer hospital
where Archbishop Romero lived and died.*

For those in the group with Carmelite connections, the visit was especially significant. The ministry of the Carmelite Missionary Sisters was very close

to the Archbishop's heart and, during a particularly dangerous period, he lived in the sacristy behind the altar. It was while celebrating Mass in the Chapel that he was shot on 24 March 1980. A small house nearby, which was built for him by his sisters, is now kept as a museum.



Sylvia Lucas, a lay Carmelite from London

Sister Maria Julia Garcia, one of the Carmelite Missionary Sisters, who is in charge of the hospital spoke to the group about the work of the sisters in caring for the sick and dying and Archbishop Romero's commitment to their ministry.

The Mass in the Chapel, celebrated by one of the priests from the group was especially poignant as he had been asked by the sisters to minister to one of the patients who had died during in the hospital just a short time before Mass began.



The group celebrated Mass at the Chapel where Archbishop Romero was shot dead on 24 March 1980

As it was also Remembrance Day, all those who had died in war and violence were remembered and during the Offertory, each person placed a poppy on the altar.

The hope of resurrection is everywhere an underlying theme and everyone who is working in some way in the area of Justice and Peace gives testimony to this.

Telling the truth of the violent happenings is an essential part of the healing for the people concerned and takes great courage.

To be allowed to share a little of the pain which so many carry, combined with their faith and hope for the future, is truly humbling experience and privilege.

“The Girls are Missing”

Thérèse Osborne speaking at a crowded commemorative Mass in London, organised by the Archbishop Romero Trust to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the killing of the four US women religious in El Salvador on 2 December 1980.

It seems like yesterday that we got the word, “The girls are missing”. That was in 1980, and just thirty years ago today, on 4 December, the bodies of Maura, Ita, Jean and Dorothy were discovered in a cow pasture in a lonely spot called San Pedro Nonualco. Later on, when some of us went back to put up a simple cross to mark the spot, as I stood there it suddenly hit me full force how terrified my friends must have been as they faced death at the hands of the Salvadoran National Guard.

Yet I am certain that each one of them was where she wanted to be: that is, in El Salvador, where

every family had lost loved ones to violence and where so often during the 12-year civil war we would meet people, usually mothers, going from place to place wherever they heard bodies had been dumped and buried, to find out if their son or daughter had ended up there in that unmarked grave.



An icon of Our Lady of Mount Carmel
at the Carmelite-served parish of Calle Real, El Salvador

The members of our mission team had been together in the cathedral of San Salvador at Archbishop Romero's funeral in March 1980 when all hell broke loose and it seemed that death was very near for all of us. But the Church was the only institution standing up for the poor, so the main worry of missionaries was not the fear of death – each of us had faced that already – but rather that we might be pulled out by superiors or bishops back home, or expelled by the Salvadorean government.

I should explain that I was a member of the Cleveland diocesan mission team that had begun working in El Salvador in 1964. In 1980, while I

was working in eastern El Salvador, in Chirilagua, Jean Donovan and Dorothy Kazel were in La Libertad, a parish of the archdiocese of San Salvador. Maura Clarke, Ita Ford and the other Maryknoll Sisters were in Chalatenango, which was a very conflictive zone north of San Salvador, also part of the archdiocese.

Maura Clarke was known as the “angel of Ciudad Sandino”, so well remembered for her kindness in the town where she had worked in Nicaragua – she literally gave her shoes away to the poor. Ita Ford was trying to get people out of refugee camps in Chalatenango – I remember her vividly describing the tensions in the camps between people fleeing violence from the left and others who were fleeing attacks by the army. Whenever the Maryknoll sisters sent word to La Libertad, Jean Donovan and Dorothy Kazel would go up into the hills in their white van to bring down people in danger and take them to a refugee centre in the capital where they would be safer. It was the same van that we discovered burned out on the side of the road leading to the airport after their deaths.

Faith and Church in Latin America

Pastorally speaking, in spite of the war, it was a wonderful time to be working in Latin America. Archbishop Luís Chávez y González, the predecessor of Archbishop Romero, had attended the Second Vatican Council, and afterwards he was one of the bishops from Latin America who said that when the Council talks about the world of the poor, it means *our* continent. Even before the Latin American Episcopal Conference in Medellín, Colombia, he and the other bishops began implementing the teachings of the Council in their pastoral plans.

One of the most powerful insights in El Salvador has been the concept of the three roles of Christ into which we are baptised -- prophet, priest and king – and how everything the Christian community does fulfils one of those roles: the prophetic or teaching role through catechesis and bible study; the priestly role through the Celebration of the Word, preparation for sacraments, liturgy, choirs, and prayers for the dead; and finally the role of Christ the King, that is, building the kingdom of God, a kingdom of love, justice and peace, where people have a decent job, have enough to eat, time with their families, and an education – a world more like the world God the Father wants for his children. We call this pastoral work in Spanish *pastoral social* or social outreach, and it is precisely in this role of building the kingdom of God that people have been called subversives and have been martyred for their faith.

Why did they die?

And this is the reason that Maura and Ita, Jean and Dorothy were killed. They had discerned that accompanying refugees was the crying need of the people. You see, all of El Salvador had turned into one huge refugee camp. People were running away from the bombing, and it's as if everyone took one giant step. Those in tiny villages went to the next town and moved in with relatives. We would often meet families walking along the road with just a few cooking pots, maybe a bag of clothes, and their children. Those in the towns would make their way to the next city, and those who could went to the capital, where makeshift refugee centres were set up in the churches. The major seminary of San Salvador had 5,000 people living in tents on the football pitch for five years. Technically we might call these people "displaced persons" rather than

refugees because they didn't have the means to leave their own country; but they were internal refugees in every sense of the word.

In the media and official government policy, if you stayed in a conflictive zone to harvest your crops you were labelled a subversive and accused of consorting with the guerrilla army; and if you left your village you were considered suspicious because you came from a conflictive area. I remember how shocked I was to see a banner stretched across the main highway in the city of San Miguel early in 1980 which read, "It is not a sin or a crime to kill a communist or a subversive". This was the kind of brainwashing young army recruits received as well when they were picked up on the road, taken off to the barracks, had their heads shaved and were inducted into the army. So for Ita, Maura, Dorothy and Jean, "option for the poor" meant rescuing and accompanying refugees even though as missionaries they risked being labelled subversives themselves.

I think their prayer was the same as Archbishop Romero's who in the days and weeks immediately preceding his martyrdom actually trembled because he knew they would kill him very soon. And yet he wrote in his retreat notes of 25 February 1980, just a month before he died:

Romero:

"I must be ready to give my life for God, no matter what kind of death awaits me. Unknown circumstances will be faced with the grace of God. He was present to the martyrs, and if it should be necessary I will feel Him very close to me as I render Him my last breath. But more valuable than the moment of dying is giving Him my whole life and living for Him".

Archbishop Romero – Martyr of Truth

A poem by Father Peter O'Neill

Oscar Arnulfo, you did not die.
You stood before the keeper of the lie
And dared to speak the truth
Through you the spoken Word once more took
flesh
And yielded fruit.

Words are just words and nothing more
Except in Salvador
Where still the keeper of the lie
Decreed that you must die
For speaking words that pierced us to the core
And D'Aubisson
Could live upon
The cancer in his heart and on his tongue.

Oscar Arnulfo, you did not die.
You stood before the keeper of the lie
And spoke the truth.
In you we woke up to the word made flesh
We tasted of its fruit.

I see the carrion
Devour the twisted body lying in the ditch
With throat half slit
And startled gaze
As one amazed
That in the blinded fate
Established by eternal laws of universe,
He could receive the payment of the Judas kiss.

Does not each twisted mutilated corpse
Cry out at vengeance gate?
Is there no pity, no remorse?

I see the carrion
Devour my very entrails
And the nails
Pierce broken body after broken mind.

Oscar Arnulfo, you did not die.
You stood before the keeper of the lie
And spoke the truth.
Through you the broken Word once more took
flesh,
And brought forth fruit.

Spirit, flesh and mind are left behind
In darkness.
Cold as an icicle inmost soul
Like tree that bends beneath the wind.
And in the shackles of our mind
We feel the ache
And shed the tears
Of fifteen lonely years
Since last you walked among us.

You left us with a blessing and some broken crusts
of bread.
Your broken body
Symbol of the many broken bodies of the dead at
broken offertory.
"God saw that it was very, very bad"
The lion sits down devouring broken lamb.
And yet we do not break.

Your paradox was broken Cross
You did not count as loss
The words you spoke for broken peoples' sake
Who saw their ploughshares beaten into swords.

Oscar Arnulfo, you did not die.
You stood before the keeper of the lie
And made us face the truth.

Through you our token word once more takes flesh
And helps our barren lives to bring forth fruit.

Peter O'Neill OFM, 1995

Peter O'Neill, an Irish Franciscan priest, lived and worked for many years in Central America. His poem "Archbishop Romero – Martyr of Truth" was written in 1995, soon after the fifteenth anniversary of Romero's martyrdom.

**Anniversary Memorial Mass
for Peter O'Neill OFM**



Peter O'Neill who died in March 2010

Fr Rags Hay-Will will celebrate an anniversary Mass in memory of Peter O'Neill OFM at 12 noon on Saturday 12 March at the Church of Our Lady of the Assumption and St Gregory, Warwick Street, London. All are welcome.

Peter O'Neill, who died last year, had lived and worked for 35 years with poor communities in El Salvador and Guatemala. He was an inspirational man, who touched the lives of all who met him with his jokes and funny stories, but also his passion for justice, love for his family and the people of Central America.

"What did you think about the Homily?"

An anecdote from Coralía Godoy, published in Memories in Mosaic by María López Vigil, a collection of stories about Archbishop Romero – available from the Archbishop Romero Trust.

"What did you think about the homily?" That was a classic Monseñor Romero question, especially on Mondays. He would ask everyone around him what they thought: me, his secretaries, Don Eduardito, the chauffeur, or the lady at the snack bar.

"So, what do you think?"

"It was a little long for my taste, Monseñor, but it was really beautiful."

"You thought it was long? But the people there seemed happy."

"No doubt they were, but you know, the Cathedral is one thing, but if I'm at home and have a lot to do, I have no choice but to turn off the radio...."

In our meetings with him, he was always so humble, and he never imposed anything on us. It was like he depended on us so much sometimes, you know? One Monday, when he asked me about the homily, I told him what was on my mind.

"You're always so quiet when I see you, Monseñor. And then when I hear you in the Cathedral, I feel like you turn into a different person – even the intonation of your voice. You project such strength and certainty... It can't all be the microphone!"

You feel that much of a change?"

“Yes, it’s like you’re two people, the everyday person, and the person who gives the homilies at the Cathedral.”

He stopped and thought about it for a while, scratched his head through that short haircut of his, and told me:

“You know, several other people have told me the same thing.”

**Romero’s Homilies and more
on the Romero Trust website**

Why not take a look at the new fabulous resources available on the Romero Trust website? www.romerotrust.org.uk/

There you can find the English translation of all of Romero’s homilies as Archbishop between 1977 and 1980. By 24 March 2011, we hope to have a sound recording of the homilies, so that you can read Romero’s words whilst listening to his voice.



San Salvador cathedral where Archbishop Romero preached

Other resources include:

- photographs from childhood to his assassination and funeral
- five pastoral letters
- lectures and literature about Romero
- liturgy resources

Film Review

Monseñor: The Last Journey of Oscar Romero

Monseñor: The Last Journey of Oscar Romero, is a new documentary film that explores the last three years of Romero’s life. The narrative develops through Romero’s own words in extracts from his Sunday homilies and from his personal diary. Each night he recorded the events of the day and his own thoughts and reflections.

This is the story of El Salvador at a time when war was approaching, told through the personal testimonies of Salvadoran *campesinos*, guerrillas, soldiers, politicians, priests, nuns and catechists—providing a chorus of voices of people who shared with Romero the tragic history of their country.

There have been several films about Monseñor Romero, but this one is different. It is the first film about Romero to place the Latin American *campesinos* at the centre of the story. It was they who inspired Romero to find his mission. It was because of the relationship he developed with them that he was killed.

In the telling of this story, the film will connect Romero’s life and death to the larger story of the cycles of poverty, rural abandon and despair that,

beyond the borders of El Salvador, are today's reality across Latin America and beyond.

The film is not yet released, nor available on DVD, but we hope to have news on its availability soon. A film premier was held in December at Southwark Cathedral, London, which a number of Romero Friends attended. There will be another showing in Norwich on Sunday 27 March.

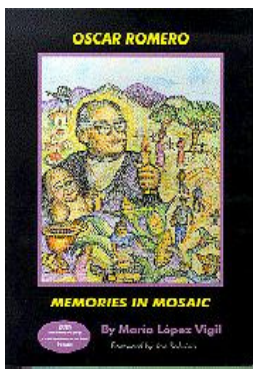
Annual Subscriptions Warmly Welcome

There are now around 400 *Friends of Romero* who belong to our solidarity network. If you can afford to do so, please send us a cheque for £10 to help cover our costs.

Even better, please sign the Standing Order and Gift Aid forms which are printed at the end of this newsletter and return them to us at 8 Dean's Mews, London W1G 9EE.

Bargain Book Offers

Oscar Romero: Memories in Mosaic



£9 (incl. p & p)

The story of Archbishop Romero, told by those who

Trustees: Julian Filochowski, Clare Dixon, Bishop Michael Evans, Rev Richard Carter, Frank Turner SJ, Tony Lester OCarm. Treasurer: Stephen Lloyd. Membership: Madge Rondo. Romero News Editor: Sarah Smith-Pearse

worked with him, lived with him and prayed with him. One of the best books on Romero.

Oscar Romero and the Communion of the Saints

OSCAR ROMERO
and
The Communion of Saints

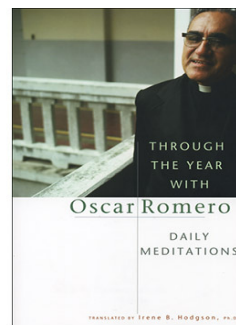


SCOTT WRIGHT

(£9 incl p & p)

One of the special joys of this biography is its inclusion of many rarely-seen photographs, taken by Octavio Durán, a Franciscan friar, who served as Romero's personal photographer.

Through the Year with Oscar Romero: Daily Meditations



(£9 incl p & p)

In these powerful and moving selections from his broadcasts, Romero invites us each day to move into the 'intimate space' of our conscience and then to go out to create a more just world.

The books may be ordered from the Archbishop Romero Trust, 8 Dean's Mews, London W1G 9EE or by email: romerotrust@btinternet.com

Please send to: **ARCHBISHOP ROMERO TRUST**
8 Dean's Mews. London W1G 9EE

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(please choose a date at least 2 months ahead)

And thereafter:	Monthly <i>or</i> Annually	Delete as appropriate
Signed:		
Date:		

ARCHBISHOP ROMERO TRUST
8, Dean's Mews
London W1G 9EE

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Address

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- current and future donations
- past donations for the last 6 years and current and future donations

This Gift Aid declaration can be withdrawn at any time by notifying the Archbishop Romero Trust.

Signed.....

Date.....

If you pay tax, all contributions to this charity qualify for Gift Aid, and The Archbishop Romero Trust can recover related tax. As a taxpayer, you must pay income tax and/or capital gains tax at least equal to the tax that is reclaimed on your gifts in a tax year.

Please inform us if you change name or home address.